

**United States House of Representative Committee**

**Sub Committee on Elections**

**Testimony of**

**Tom Roberts**

**President of the Ohio Conference of the NAACP**

**April 25, 2019**

Founded in 1909, the NAACP is our nation's oldest, largest, and most widely recognized grass based civil rights organization.

Despite the fact that African –Americans and other racial and ethnic groups are guaranteed the right to vote by the 15 Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. States are using outright intimidation to stop people from casting free and unfettered ballots.

I want to share with you some of what is going on in Ohio.

**Purge**

As of the 2006 election, Ohio had 7,860,052 registered voters and the state reported 416, 744 registrants (5.35%) of the total registrants were removed deleted from the rolls in 2006.

The numbers of voters purged vary significantly ranging as low as 20, 353 registrants removed from 1998 & 1999 in Franklin County for failure to vote in the previous four year or moving out of the county to 170,00 names moved removed from the Cuyahoga voter rolls in 2001 and 2002 .

All of the purging of voters was done as part of Ohio annual voter roll maintenance process required by the National Voter Registration Act, Ohio Secretary of State was cancelling the registrations.

The “Supplemental Process “targeted voters who did voter in two consecutive federal elections. Voters purged in the process often did not see, or understand the notice and did not realized they had been purged.

This resulted in Ohio's A Phillip Randolph Institute filing a lawsuit against the Ohio Secretary of State. The case ended up in the U. S. Supreme Court. The Supreme Court ruled in behalf of the Ohio Secretary of State.

In the end, the U S Supreme Court's decision allows states to treat the fundamental right to vote as a use it –or- lose it right.

## **Golden Week**

Golden week was created in 2005 with new early voting legislation that allowed voters to cast absentee ballots up to thirty five days before the elections. This allowed for about a week of overlapping with the deadline of voter registration.

The number of people who took advantage of these opportunity proved to be considerable.

During the 2012 general election, approximately 90,000 people cast votes during Golden Week, which translated to about 14% of the total early, in person absentee ballots cast that year.

Golden Week and early voting opportunities have been the subject of much debate.

In 2014 the Ohio House passed Senate Bill 238 , which eliminated Golden Week followed by a directive by the Secretary of State ,setting state wide early voting hours to be used in forth coming elections .

Shortly afterwards the ACLU filed a lawsuit that became known as NAACP vs Husted.

The Ohio Conference of the NAACP, the League of Woman Voters and other groups were named plaintiffs in the lawsuit.

In 2015 a compromise was reached in which Husted agreed to restore some weekend and evening voting hours. (No Golden week)

## **Restrictive Legislation**

Since 2013 the members of the Ohio General Assembly have introduced at least nine bills to restrict voting in Ohio. These bills are harmful because they block voter access and participation.

In 2011 HB 194 was passed. The bill slashed early voting days in half, eliminated the last weekend of early voting, , and eliminated the requirement that poll workers direct voters to the correct precinct.

Voters successfully petitioned to referendum the bill, which the legislature repealed HB 194 in 2012.

I thank the committee for coming to Ohio and hearing our concerns.